

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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LEGISLATION ON CHILD ASSAULT.

A meeting was held at 194, Queen's Gate, on Saturday, July 22nd, on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, at which Mrs. Bedford Fenwick read her wonderful story on the subject of child assault, and Miss Mayo (Organising Secretary of the Six Point Group) delivered an address. Miss H. L. Pearse (Superintendent of the L.C.C. School Nurses) took the chair. Tea was provided, after which the gathering—very well attended considering the stormy weather—adjourned to the drawing-room for the meeting.

"LITTLE CUCKOO FLOWER."

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick opened by reading her story, "Little Cuckoo Flower," which has already appeared in this Journal some years ago, and is shortly, at the request of the meeting, to be republished in pamphlet form for wider distribution. The poignant "human document" was most beautifully and sympathetically read, and moved the hearers profoundly. The intense stillness of the entire audience was an extraordinary tribute to the dramatic power of the story and the personality of its exponent. As members will have either read it in this Journal, or will have an opportunity to do so later on, it is only necessary to say it is the tale of "Little Cuckoo Flower," the pride of the village, and the idol of her mother, martyred by a scoundrel who escaped punishment, who we are led to believe suffered death at the hands of the heartbroken mother. During the reading the picture of "Little Cuckoo Flower," with tragedy in her eyes, as if her doom were foreshadowed there, was handed round—a "silent witness" to the need for such meetings as this and for the necessity of every effort being put forth to stamp out the evils discussed at them. To have clean and beautiful homes we have first to do away with ugliness and squalor; to sweeten and cleanse the world outside the same courage is needed, even in a greater degree, because the ugliness of the streets is greater than any dusty corners in a house.

THE CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

Miss Mayo gave a fearless and earnest address. After saying she had pledged herself to combat this scourge as far as in her lay, and urging others to do the same, she explained the important clauses in the Bill. It would protect girls between thirteen and sixteen, because while a man will often not commit a legal offence, he has not the same scruple regarding a moral one. Rescue workers thought it would help to cleanse the streets of young girls. Miss Mayo said that while many girls of sixteen were, after all, only children, it was a gross unfairness that the age of twenty-three years should apply in the case of a young man "led astray" by a precocious and vicious girl. The law was less to blame than its administration in many cases. Penal servitude for life could be inflicted for these offences but such a sentence was never passed for these crimes.

While there are degrees of assaults, the charge can be commuted from a more serious into a less serious one, as long as the case is in the hands of the magistrates. Public opinion should be stirred up and these cases should be sent to the High Court, where no such reduction of the charge can take place. Women, she held, should not evade jury service, because many men would not, in their presence, dare to acquit these scoundrels or lighten their sentences. Mr. Parr, of the N.S.P.C.C., had told the Six Point Group that a judge told him he believed such acquittals sometimes occurred because "members of the jury had committed offences themselves." She pictured the ordeal of a child in a crowded court (whence the women had been cleared out) replying to questions from the counsel for her tormentor, contradicting herself and disqualifying her evidence. Miss Mayo laid stress on the necessity for such children being examined by a responsible and properly appointed woman, and the deposition made by the child being taken down outside the court. The force of public opinion could accomplish this reform. She mentioned Homes in Croydon and Wakefield where poor little sufferers of from four to twelve years were unable to go out for fear of even seeing a man, such was the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)